

IN THE CLAIMS:

1. (currently amended) A web coating apparatus having a vacuum chamber which has between a back wall and at least one removable closing plate a shield with a flat ~~cover~~ cover at least one guide ~~roll~~ roll and a coating cylinder with an axis (A) as well as at least one coating source being disposed in the vacuum chamber, wherein the ends of the at least one guide roll and of the coating cylinder which face the closing plate are fastened to the cover with bearings, and wherein ~~that~~ the space in the vacuum chamber underneath the coating cylinder is ~~kept~~ free of supporting elements.

2. (previously presented) A web coating apparatus according to claim 1, wherein the at least one guide roll and the coating cylinder are journaled on the back wall by their ends remote from the closing plate.

3. (previously presented) A web coating apparatus according to claim 1, wherein the at least one guide roll and the coating cylinder are journaled at their ends remote from the closing plate on supporting elements in front of the back wall and are held on the cover.

4. (previously presented) A web coating apparatus according to claim 1, wherein the space underneath and laterally of the coating cylinder is divided by dividing walls into at least two sub-chambers and that the dividing walls have at their ends facing the coating cylinder sealing means whose curvature is adapted to the radius of the coating cylinder such that between the sealing elements and the coating cylinder arcuate sealing means whose curvature is adapted to the radius of the coating cylinder such that between the sealing elements and the coating cylinder arcuate sealing gaps are formed.

5. (previously presented) A web coating apparatus according to claim 4, wherein the sealing means are connected via actuating mechanisms to the corresponding dividing wall such that the sealing gaps can be adjusted radially to minimum values.

6. (previously presented) A web coating apparatus according to claim 1, within the vacuum chamber at least four sub-chambers are formed on the circumference of the coating cylinder by dividing walls.

7. (currently amended) A web coating apparatus according to claim 1, wherein the two uppermost dividing walls enclose an angle between 120 and 180 degrees downward with respect to the axis (A).

8. (currently amended) A web coating apparatus according to claim 1, wherein the partial circumference of the shield lying underneath the two uppermost dividing walls is of partially cylindrical configuration.

9. (currently amended) A web coating apparatus according to claim 8, wherein a total of four guide rolls are arranged in the sub-chamber lying above the two uppermost dividing walls.

10. (currently amended) A web coating apparatus according to claim 1, wherein the dividing walls have at their ends opposite from the back wall radially running sealing bars against which the closing plate can be placed in contact.

11. (previously presented) A web coating apparatus according to claim 10, wherein the sealing bars have elastomeric sealing strips running parallel to their radial center lines, against which the closing plate can be brought in contact upon the closing of the vacuum chamber.

12. (currently amended) A web coating apparatus according to claim 11, wherein the coating cylinder has an end facing the closing plate in front of which a fixed ring sector is disposed, which partially encompasses the bottom end of the element supporting the coating cylinder.

13. (currently amended) A web coating apparatus according to claim 1, wherein the coating cylinder is surrounded at its ends within the sub-chambers by strip-like masks curved cylindrically coaxially, which extend around the said ends with tight clearance and shield the coating cylinder against the coating of their surface portions not covered by the web.

14. (previously presented) A web coating apparatus according to claim 13, wherein the front mask has an elastomeric sealing edge with which the closing plate can be brought into engagement when the vacuum chamber is closed.

15. (previously presented) A web coating apparatus according to claim 13, wherein the ring sector extends along the circumference to its end edges within the front mask.

16. (previously presented) A web coating apparatus according to claim 1, wherein the total height of the apparatus from the floor is no more than 2.5 meters.

17. (previously presented) A web coating apparatus according to claim 1, wherein the vacuum chamber has on each side of the coating cylinder a side chamber in which a winding mandrel, one for an unwinding roll and one for a winding roll as well as corresponding guide rolls for the web.

18. (previously presented) A web coating apparatus according to claim 11, wherein the side chambers are constituted as vacuum chambers and are joined to the sub-chamber of the vacuum chamber through slits for the passage of the web.

19. (previously presented) A web coating apparatus according to claim 1, wherein all sub-chambers of the vacuum chamber and the side chambers are connect each to its own vacuum pump.

20. (previously presented) A web coating apparatus according to claim 17, wherein the upper sides of the side chambers lie at least substantially at the same level as the cover of the vacuum chamber.

21. (currently amended) Web coating apparatus according to claim 14, wherein a ring ~~the ring~~ sector extends along the circumference to its end edges within the front mask.